

VZCZCXRO2290  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH  
DE RUEHKL #1640/01 3251125  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 211125Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0275  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2400  
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 1260  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 001640

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MTS AND G/TIP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2017  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [KWMN](#) [SMIG](#) [MY](#)  
SUBJECT: ALLEGED SEX TRAFFICKING ON LABUAN ISLAND

REF: A. KUALA LUMPUR 1568 - GOM REQUESTS TRAINING  
[1](#)B. KUALA LUMPUR 1557 - E. MALAYSIA POLICE DISCUSS TIP

Classified By: Political Section Chief Mark D. Clark for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

#### Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Poloff visited Labuan in October in light of reports of some Filipinas trafficking into brothels on the island. We found that prostitution takes place under cover of legitimate business fronts and most Filipinas employed there have temporary work visas as "guest relations officers." Labuan police reportedly are responsive to specific complaints about suspected trafficking victims; training could encourage a proactive law enforcement response. End Summary.

#### Philippine Embassy Reports of Trafficking

[1](#)2. (C) On October 4, Poloff visited the Malaysian federal territory of Labuan, an island of 77,000 residents located off the coast of Sabah and Brunei, to gain more information on reports from the Philippines Embassy in Kuala Lumpur that Filipinas are sometimes trafficked into prostitution on Labuan. The Philippines Embassy estimates that approximately 2,500 - 3,000 Filipinas work as prostitutes on the island, and believes that a small number of the prostitutes may be trafficking victims. We were not able to confirm any specific cases of trafficking, but we will continue to monitor closely this area. While the act of prostitution by a Malaysian citizen in itself is not illegal under Malaysian law, foreign citizens engaging in prostitution, profiting from the prostitution of others, and running a brothel are crimes. During our visit we inspected entertainment venues seemingly operating as brothels, and interviewed prostitutes, volunteer social workers and senior local police officials.

#### Entertainment Fronts for Brothels

[1](#)3. (C) Labuan features a concentration of entertainment businesses (e.g., bars, karaoke lounges) that appeared to operate as brothels. Each of the four we inspected contained 30-50 women working as prostitutes; most were Filipinas, while a smaller number were ethnic Chinese. We spoke with Filipinas working inside the four businesses who described working conditions and fees for sex. One Filipina said she wanted to return to the Philippines, but could not leave the brothel; we reported this immediately to the Philippines embassy and local police. (Note: As of November 16, the

Philippines embassy was working with Malaysian authorities to repatriate the Filipina. If the woman agrees to act as a witness in the Philippines, trafficking charges may be brought against the Filipino employment agent who reportedly used deception to recruit her, according to a Philippines diplomat. End Note.) We heard allegations from volunteer social workers that some prostitutes were under 18 years of age (minors in prostitution are defined as TIP victims under U.S. law), but their ages had been misrepresented in their travel documents. This allegation was supported by poloff's observations of a small number of individuals, presented by a madam as prostitutes, who appeared to be in their mid-teens, although we were not able to confirm the precise age of the individuals. We also heard allegations of sex tourism from neighboring Brunei and drug usage among the prostitutes.

Police Reactive to Complaints; Immigration Issue  
-----

¶4. (C) Police described sex trafficking in Labuan as an isolated problem, and said that they had handled four cases, involving eight women, the preceding month. The police are reportedly responsive to specific complaints about suspected trafficking victims, according to Philippines diplomats, social workers, and senior police officers in Labuan. With Malaysian police assistance, Philippines embassy staff reportedly intervenes successfully some 10 times per month to repatriate women complaining of abuse. The Philippines embassy describes some of these repatriation cases as trafficking in terms that appear to be in accordance with U.S. TIP definitions involving deception and/or coercion of the victim. While operating a brothel is illegal in Malaysia, police do not appear to challenge the prostitution taking place under legitimate business fronts. Police

KUALA LUMP 00001640 002 OF 002

pointed out that most Filipina "hostesses" arrive in Labuan with valid visas as "guest relations officers," which permitted them to work for six-month periods at specified entertainment businesses. The Filipinas' legal immigration status made police intervention more difficult, officials explained. Police officials admitted they had little expertise in combating trafficking and, in light of Malaysia's new comprehensive anti-trafficking act, welcomed any training the U.S. or others could provide.

Comment  
-----

¶5. (C) Given the number of foreign prostitutes on the island and the TIP allegations we have heard, we intend to keep a close eye on Labuan and are encouraging NGOs and the Malaysian authorities to do the same. Technical assistance aimed at implementing the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act could encourage greater awareness of trafficking crimes, more ready identification of victims, and a more proactive approach to combating trafficking by Labuan's police and immigration authorities.  
KEITH